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The Solemn League and Covenant and the Making of a People in Ulster

ABSTRACT

To be inserted

Although the Solemn League and Covenant played an important role in shaping the history of seventeenth-century Ulster, its significance and meaning to those who subscribed in Ulster remains poorly understood.[1] Some argue that it constituted a pan-Britannic commitment to reforming religion across the three kingdoms—with Ireland as a late addition or even an afterthought; others that it was a homogenised pan-British presbyterian project, a vehicle for Scottish imperialism in England and Ireland, or an assertion of Scottish identity in Ulster.[2] More generally, the Solemn League has been

[1] D. H. Akenson, *God's Peoples: Covenant and land in South Africa, Israel and Ulster* (Ithaca, NY, 1992); N. Southern, 'Ulster, God's people, and the interplay between Old Testament and Calvinistic conceptions of covenant', *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 22 (2007) 19–34; J. G. V. McGaughey, 'No surrender? The legacy of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 11 (2013) 213–30.

[2] C. J. Guthrie, 'The Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland', *SHR* 15 (1918) 292–309; K. M. MacKenzie, *The Solemn League and Covenant of the Three Kingdoms and the Cromwellian Union, 1643–1663* (Abingdon, 2017); Kevin Forkan, 'The fatal ingredient of the covenant': The place of the Ulster Scottish colonial community during the 1640s', in Brian MacCuarta (ed.), *Reshaping Ireland 1550–1700: Colonization and its consequences* (Dublin, 2011), 261–80; Michael Perceval-Maxwell, 'The adoption of the Solemn League and

knit loosely into the story of presbyterianism in Ireland. This is epitomised in seventeenth-century histories of Irish presbyterianism, which placed the Solemn League within a teleological interpretation that tended towards the inevitable establishment of a providentially-ordained presbyterian church in the north of Ireland. Patrick Adair, for instance, saw an 'infant [presbyterian] church' existing in 1639—three years before the first presbyterian church was established—but argued that the church could be traced back to the arrival in Ulster of men like Robert Blair in the 1620s or even a decade earlier.[3] This narrative has diminished the distinctive meaning of the Solemn League to the people of Ulster. More recently historians have challenged the older teleological narrative by arguing for a great diversity of protestant views that only coalesced into a presbyterian settlement in the wake of the rising of 1641 and the ecclesiastical vacuum it created.[4] This article seeks to investigate how the Solemn League shaped Ulster protestant culture by exploring the longer history of protestant plantation and by identifying some underlying ideological and theological themes.

Covenant by Scots in Ulster', *Scotia* 2 (1978) 3–18. Perceval-Maxwell did note the importance of pressure from the lower ranks of British soldiers for instigating subscription in Ulster.

[3] *Presbyterian History in Ireland: Two seventeenth-century narratives,* ed. Robert Armstrong *et al.*, Ulster Hist. Foundation (Belfast, 2016) [*PHI*], 70.

[4] Robert Armstrong, 'Ireland's puritan revolution? The emergence of Ulster presbyterianism reconsidered', *English Historical Review* 121 (2006) 1,048–74; John McCafferty, 'When reformations collide', in A. I. Macinnes and J. H. Ohlmeyer (eds), *The Stuart Kingdoms in the Seventeenth Century* (Dublin, 2002), 186–203.

Amongst the best work to have located the Solemn League in its Ulster context is that by Robert Armstrong.[5] Challenging the narrative of English or Scottish models of presbyterianism imposed upon Ulster, Armstrong argued:

> What had emerged, before the wars [of the 1640s], was not a Presbyterian church or, arguably, even a Presbyterian movement. Rather there were pools of 'godly' Protestants, pools which might be flooded from the wider population, particularly from among the Scottish community. The deluge of the 1640s, sweeping away much of the social, political and ecclesiastical order in Ulster, produced just such a flood.[6]

This had, of course, been shaped by an influx of Scottish planters and ministers and by the partial collapse of the political and social order after the rising of 1641, which allowed for the consolidation of a presbyterian tradition within a milieu of diverse protestantisms. For Armstrong, two crucial events forged a transformation of church and society in protestant Ulster: first, the establishment of a presbytery by a Scots army sent to quash the rising; and second, a petitioning culture that was mobilised to request the return of ministers exiled in the 1630s and which sought to create a link to a pre-presbyterian heritage.[7] Scottish involvement in Ulster in the 1640s, he argued, 'was not an imperialism of armies or churches which the Scots sent to Ireland so much as a colony of the mind'.[8]

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[5] Robert Armstrong, *Protestant War: The 'British' of Ireland and the war of the three kingdoms* (Manchester, 2005), ch. 4.

[6] Robert Armstrong, 'The Irish alternative: Scottish and English presbyterianism in Ireland', in Robert Armstrong and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, *Insular Christianity: Alternative models of the church in Britain and Ireland, c. 1570–c. 1700* (Manchester, 2013), 207–24, at 209.

[7] Armstrong, 'Ireland's puritan revolution?', 1048–9.

[8] Armstrong, *Protestant War*, 228.

Put another way, 'the emergence of Ulster Presbyterianism … was the triumph not of "Scottish" religion, but of one option for a Scottish impact on Irish Protestantism'.[9] Here it is not my intention to rehash Armstrong's meticulous analysis but, instead, to offer a broader contextualisation of the religious networks in plantation Ulster and a study of the reception of particular Scottish intellectual influences. It is argued that the Scottish interpretation of the Solemn League provided Ulster protestants with a means to reinterpret the province and their own place within it. In doing so, an important lacuna in the history of Ulster will be addressed— that is, Ulster presbyterians as a covenanted people and the emergence of rhetoric that linked them to Ulster as a land of promise. This would not have been possible without the Solemn League and Covenant.

Ireland's inclusion in the Solemn League represented a last-minute decision by the English parliament following a proposal of Sir John Clotworthy, head of a prominent English planter family in Co. Antrim. The House of Commons instructed all protestants in Ireland to take the covenant. [10] Richard Bagwell claimed that a 'clever stroke of politicians rather than theologians' marked out the protestant population of Ireland and excluded Irish confederates from the rights of subjects; however for the architects of Ireland's inclusion in the Solemn League it was, indeed, theologically political.[11] In the wake of a peace concluded with covenanted Scotland in 1640, puritan preachers declared before the House of Commons that it was imperative for England to make a covenant between God and the nation.[12] Cornelius Burges, for instance, heralded the 'solemn *Covenant* entred into, not by *Asa* alone, but by all the people of God, a Covenant solemnized in publique by *Sacrifice*, by *Oath*,

[9] Armstrong, 'Ireland's puritan revolution?', 1,049.

[10] *Journal of the House of Commons* (London, 1742–) [*CJ*], iii. 277.

[11] Richard Bagwell, *Ireland under the Stuarts and during the Interregnum*, 3 vols (London and New York, 1909), ii. 56.

[12] J. C. Spalding, 'Sermons before parliament (1640–1649) as a public puritan diary', *Church History* 36 (1967) 24–35, at 28–9.

and under the highest penalty of *death* it selfe to all that should not observe it'.[13] Two years later John Arrowsmith articulated the need for an English equivalent to the National Covenant.[14] The Solemn League was understood explicitly as fulfilling this desire. According to the house of commons, it represented God 'pitch[ing] his Tents over and about them'.[15] Preaching at the swearing of the Solemn League by the House of Lords on 15 October 1643, Thomas Temple expounded on Nehemiah 10:29: 'all these now join their fellow Israelites ... and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord our Lord'.[16] Dublin-born and a former fellow of Trinity College Dublin, Temple knew the contemporary Irish context well. His brother, Sir John Temple—with whom he remained close—was elected to the Irish parliament in 1643 and appointed master of the rolls in Ireland and a privy councillor in 1640.[17] The important Irish context probably explains why Thomas was invited to preach at the signing of the Solemn League.

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[13] Cornelius Burges, *A Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons Assembled in Parliament* (London, 1641), 6.

[14] Spalding, 'Sermons before parliament', 33.

[15] *CJ*, iii. 223.

[16] Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, 5 vols (Dublin, 1755), iii. 61; J. S. Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland*, 3 vols (Belfast, 1867), i. 392; James Reid, *Memoirs of the lives and writings of those eminent divines who convened in the famous Assembly at Westminster, in the seventeenth century*, 2 vols (Paisley, 1815), ii. 182–3.

[17] After falling foul of the king, in 1643 Sir John travelled to London, aligned himself with the Independents and was elected to the English parliament for Chichester in 1645 through the support of Phillip Sidney, Viscount Lisle. For the relationship between Lisle, Ireland and Temple in particular, see Patrick Little, 'The Irish "Independents" and Viscount Lisle's lieutenancy of Ireland', *Historical Journal* 44 (2001) 941–61, at 948.

The export of the Solemn League to Ireland, and Ulster in particular, reflected English and Scottish priorities in promoting unity between the kingdoms and reforming the state churches. The document stressed, however, that Ireland lagged behind England and Scotland: church and kingdom were in a 'deplorable estate' and 'extirpation of popery' had not yet been effected.[18] Comprehensive subscription was ordered across England and Scotland but in Ireland this established a clear distinction between the protestant minority and the catholic majority. Although the legal establishment of the Church of Ireland and the requirement of church membership for full political rights meant that this distinction already existed—with varying degrees of accommodation[19]—the Solemn League was an emphatic assertion of ethnic, cultural, religious and ontological differences. It also served to eradicate one of the principal barriers to protestant unity: by denouncing episcopacy—a major issue for nonconformists—and proclaiming that protestants in Ireland could declare their chosen status, the Solemn League built on a growing typological rhetoric within the British plantations in Ireland, especially in the north.[20]

While the English and Scottish parliaments perhaps regarded English and Scots in Ulster as subject to their respective authority, in reality the planters were subject to distinctly different political, legal and ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Planters generally conformed to this context and 'settlers adapted remarkably quickly to the ideas and institutions of common law'.[21] To clarify their status, in 1630 Scots planters seeking naturalisation in Ireland asked the Scottish parliament to

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[18] *Constitutional Documents of the Puritans*, ed. S. R. Gardiner, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1906), 267, 269.

[19] See Aidan Clarke, 'Varieties of uniformity: The first century of the church of Ireland', *Studies in Church History* 25 (1989) 105–22.

[20] For the use of the Israelite paradigm to identify Irish protestants as a chosen people, see Alan Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland, 1590–1641*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), 243–76.

[21] Raymond Gillespie, 'Scotland and Ulster: a presbyterian perspective, 1603–1700', in W. P. Kelly and J. R. Young (eds), *Scotland and the Ulster Plantations* (Dublin, 2006), 84–107, at 88.

intercede on their behalf with the Irish parliament.[22] Nevertheless, planters sometimes struggled to find accommodation with the Church of Ireland. Many settlers had left England or Scotland because the episcopal churches in both kingdoms increasingly demanded conformity.[23] From the beginning of the plantation in 1608 English and Scots who settled in Ulster were *de facto* subjects of the Irish parliament and subject to Irish law and the authority of the Church of Ireland. In 1623 James VI & I (and subsequently Charles I) asserted emphatically that planters were obliged to attend their local parish church.[24] In the intervening years, particularly after the introduction of the Perth articles in 1618, growing numbers of Scots headed for Ulster to escape episcopal authority and liturgical innovation. They did not, however, establish new churches but rather found ways to moderate their conformity to the episcopalian establishment. Experiences varied greatly according to diocese but several Scots ministers were admitted to Church of Ireland charges in the 1620s and 1630s.[25] Even those who had left Scotland because of the innovations of the Stuart kings did not work in opposition to the established church, especially if they wanted to remain in Ireland. Indeed, they denounced

[22] *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, ed. K. M. Brown *et al* (St Andrews, 2007–20) [https://rps.ac.uk/; accessed 28 Aug. 2020], A1630/7/74].

[23] For a full discussion of religious, economic and legal motivations see Michael Perceval-Maxwell, *The Scottish Migration to Ulster in the Reign of James I* (London, 1973), 19–45, 91–113, 252–89; Raymond Gillespie, *Colonial Ulster: The settlement of east Ulster, 1600–1641* (Cork, 1985).

[24] *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, 1615–1625*, ed. C. W. Russell and J. P. Pendergast (London, 1880), 416–19; *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, ed. J. R. Dasent *et al.*(London, 1890–), xxxix. 144.

[25] For examples, see A. F. Scott Pearson, 'Alumni of St Andrews and the settlement of Ulster', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 3rd ser., 14 (1951) 7–14.

English separatists who did.[26] Yet, despite a degree of unity among protestants, especially during the revivals of the 1620s, they lacked a coherent identity.

Perceval-Maxwell described the state of the Church of Ireland in the diocese of Down and Connor in 1634:

> No fewer than twenty-four of the ministers were nonconformist. The rest of the clergy, although not nonconformists themselves, were 'drawn to a neglect of all order'. Not one church in three in the entire diocese possessed a Book of Common Prayer, and even in parishes where there was a prayer book it was seldom used.[27]

Among those identified as nonconformists were the Scots Robert Blair and George Dunbar. The pressure on them and others grew from 1626 under Robert Echlin, bishop of Down and Connor, and it continued under his successor, Henry Leslie—both of whom were also Scots.[28] Yet the term nonconformist must not be passed over uncritically. As in Scotland in the 1620s and 1630s, 'nonconformists' did not function outside the established church; nor did they denounce it as a false church.[29] Nonconformity did not, therefore, equate to dissent or schism.[30] Instead, nonconformists sought leeway for the rigorous reformed practices that James Ussher, archbishop of Armagh, seemed

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[26] Patrick Adair, 'A true narrative of the rise and progress of the presbyterian government in the north of Ireland', in *PHI*, 89.

[27] Michael Perceval-Maxwell, 'Strafford, the Ulster-Scots and the covenanters', *Irish Hist. Studies* 18 (1973) 524–51, at 524.

[28] *Ibid*., 525.

[29] Clarke, 'Varieties of conformity', 120–1.

[30] R. S. Spurlock, 'Scotland', in John Coffey (ed.), *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions: Volume 1* (Oxford, 2020), 182–203.

inclined to countenance and, where possible, they attempted to avoid aspects of the episcopalian liturgy which they found offensive.[31] While some opposed practices such as kneeling at communion, most rejected congregationalism and refrained from pursuing a new model of church government for the church of Ireland in this period.[32]

Protestant settlers in Ulster, therefore, had no idealised church of their own. They either integrated as best they could into the Church of Ireland or else considered leaving. They recognised their location in a different kingdom with its own church, laws and politics. Instead of outright opposition, they formed networks to navigate their distaste for prelacy and schism. There was space for additional preaching, the espousal of a strictly Calvinistic theology and the implementation of a voluntary system of discipline.[33] It was not always easy to negotiate these issues but leading figures, like the Scot James Hamilton, Viscount Claneboye, navigated ministerial appointments through the episcopal process of collation.[34] Similarly, another Scot, Hugh Montgomery, third Viscount Ards, used family connections to support fervently Calvinist ministers, such as Josias Welsh—the grandson of John Knox.[35]

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[31] Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology, history and politics in early modern Ireland and England* (Oxford, 2007), 164–74; A. L. Capern, 'The Caroline church: James Ussher and the Irish dimension', *Historical Journal* 39 (1996) 57–85.

[32] Alan Ford, 'Scottish protestant clergy and the origins of dissent', in David Edwards and Simon Egan (eds), *The Scots in Early Stuart Ireland* (Manchester, 2016), 116–40, at 131.

[33] Raymond Gillespie, 'Dissenters and nonconformists, 1661–1700', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Irish Dissenting Tradition, 1650–1750* (Dublin, 1995), 11.

[34] Ford, 'Scottish protestant clergy', 121–4.

[35] For correspondence between Welsh and Anna, countess of Eglinton, see *10th Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1874) [*HMC*, x.], apps 1, 46.

Navigating this landscape became significantly more difficult after Thomas Wentworth's appointment as lord deputy of Ireland in 1632. After subscription of the National Covenant in Scotland, Wentworth's administration devised the Black Oath that targeted protestant Scots, by demanding unconditional obedience to the king and the renunciation of all other oaths that risked undermining royal authority. Males over the age of sixteen where required to subscribe. The persecution of those who refused prompted many to return to Scotland, where they were compelled to take the National Covenant.[36] But, although it has been argued that the Black Oath created a significant barrier between Scots in Ulster and those in Scotland, division was more pronounced within the Church of Ireland. The real cleft between Scots in Ireland and those in Scotland was the National Covenat itself.

The language of the National Covenant pertained to Scots law, the Scottish crown and the Church of Scotland. While there may have been sympathy for the Covenant among Ulster protestants—and some were actively involved in the Scottish politics which surrounded it[37]—it did not hold sway in Ulster. Hence, Viscounts Ards and Claneboye subscribed the Black Oath.[38] While partisan historians lambasted both for their compliance, since both lived and sought their futures in Ireland the National Covenant did not, and could not, influence their approach to the Black Oath. Meanwhile, they actively supported presbyterian-minded ministers. Claneboye favoured recruitment of Scottish presbyterians to Ulster charges in the 1620s and supported clergy and laity whose conscience did not allow adherence to the Black Oath. Robert Blair reported that his own commission to minister in Ireland came from Claneboye's Scottish kinsman, James Hamilton of

[36] Adair, 'True narrative', 111–13; Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland, PA2/22, fos 31v–32v.

[37] J. R. Young, 'Scotland and Ulster connections in the seventeenth century: Sir Robert Adair of Kinhilt and the Scottish parliament under the covenanters', *Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies* 3 (2013) 16–76.

[38] Adair, 'True narrative', 111.

Kirktonholm.[39] Ards, meanwhile, wrote to the general assembly supporting a petition to send ministers to Ulster in 1643. He subscribed the Solemn League in 1644 and renewed his subscription in 1649.[40] Patrick Adair claimed that the importance of the National Covenant for Scotland 'coulde not be denyed but God wrought wonders for his people, even as sensibly as he did when *he brought Israel out of Egypt and Babylon*, and when he brought the church in Luthers time from Spirituall Babylon';[41] but many Scots now rooted in Ireland knew that the National Covenant was not a transformative document for their new home.

In 1641 disgruntled protestants in the north of Ireland wrote to the English parliament.[42] They proclaimed an antipathy for both bishops—'the children of Ishmael and Esau'—and the 'fines, fees, and Imprisonments at their pleasure; their Silencing, Suspending, Banishing, and Excommunicating of our learned and conscionable Ministers'.[43] By contrast, they sympathised with the puritan-dominated Long Parliament, declaring them to be 'the true sons of Israel'.[44] Above all, the petition identified Wentworth as the primary cause of their suffering. Through his cruel imposition of ecclesiastical canons and demands for conformity, bishops

[39] *The Life of Mr Robert Blair, minister of St Andrews, containing his autobiography, from 1593 to 1636*, ed. Thomas McCrie, Wodrow Soc. (Edinburgh, 1848), 51, 58; Reid, *History*, i. 378.

[40] Terry Clavin, 'Montgomery, Hugh, third viscount Montgomery of the Ards, first earl of Mount-Alexander', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, ed. James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge, 2009).

[41] Adair, 'True narrative', 109 (my italics).

[42] *The Humble Petition of the Protestant Inhabitants of the Counties of Antrim, Downe, Tyrone, &c. part of the Province of Vlster in the Kingdome of Ireland concerning Bishops* (London, 1641), 1.

[43] *Ibid.*, 2, 12.

[44] *Ibid.*, 12.

> have suppress divers others from preaching, both on the afternoon on the Lords day, and in many places where weekly Lectures were maintained, either by the free-will of the Minister, or cost of the people, they have utterly forbidden the same, and showne all manner of discountenance to those who were forward therein, so that a Lecturing Minister appeared before them, under more prejudice then a popish Priest, or undermining Iesuite.[45]

Wentworth and the bishops were further accused of slandering Scottish protestantism and the National Covenant in a manner that recalled Korah, Dathan and Abiram—the Israelites who rebelled against Moses.[46] The petition, delivered to the House of commons by Sir John Clotworthy, declared the 'provision of a powerfull and able ministry, the onlely best way to promote Plantation, and settle the kingdome in the profession and practice of true religion'.[47] Bishop John Bramhall reported that it contained 1,500 subscriptions. When Ussher saw it in London, it had been subscribed by 'a huge number of hands', implying a significant increase.[48]

The sympathies expressed in the petition for puritan and presbyterian practices such as afternoon lectures, and its defence of the covenanters and call for orthodox ministers, suggest that the subscribers at least partly represented the legacy of the revivals of the 1620s. The revivals, centred around Antrim and the Six Mile Water flowing westward from near Larne, had been strongly supported by important political figures and planters—such as Sir Arthur Chichester (a former lord deputy of Ireland), Clotworthy (and his father, Sir Hugh), Claneboye and Ards[49]. Like Claneboye and Ards, Chichester and Clotworthy recruited ministers who preached rigorous reformed theology.

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[45] *Ibid*., 6.

[46] *Ibid*., 6–7. See Num. 16

[47] Reid, *History*, i. 269n.

[48] *The Rawdon Papers*, ed. Edward Berwick (London, 1819), 82.

[49] Ford, 'Scottish protestant clergy', 124.

Chichester, for example, was responsible for enticing John Ridge and George Hubbard to Ulster—men who had studied under the leading (albeit moderate) puritan Thomas Cartwright. Along with several members of his nonconforming congregation in Southwark, Hubbard settled into the Carrickfergus church where Chichester worshipped in 1621. After Hubbard's death in 1623 most of the Southwark congregation returned to England;[50] but the exuberant James Glendinning seemingly continued ministry in Carrickfergus and is credited with initiating the Six Mile Water revival after his move to Muckamore (Oldstone), near Antrim.

Ridge was critical of the more excessive revivalistic behaviour, such as swooning and babbling, but noted that the revival coalesced around monthly meetings, which featured lectures attended by up to 1,000 people.[51] The impact, he claimed, was that 'the people have a notable commerce one with another, people with people, family with family, one private Christian with others, and being thus constant in their fervency and spiritual trading, the work comes on mightily among them'.[52] Ridge collaborated with Robert Blair, James Hamilton and Robert Cunningham to deliver four sermons at each summer meeting and three during the winter. From 1625 to 1632—when they were suppressed by the state church— the meetings took place with the active support of Sir Hugh Clotworthy, a military veteran who served under Chichester, and then his son, Sir John.[53] It

[50] Reid, *History*, i. 94–5; Andrew Robinson, ''Not otherwise worthy to be named, but as a firebrand brought from Ireland to inflame this kingdom': The Political and Cultural Milieu of Sir John Clotworthy during the Stuart Civil Wars', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Ulster, 2013), 35–6; Barry Vann, 'Presbyterian social ties and mobility in the Irish sea culture area, 1610–1690', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 18 (2005) 227–54, at 236.

[51] According to Adair, 'True narrative', 89, the 'Blessed work of conversion … spread beyond the bounds of Down and Antrim … whence many come to monethly meetings'.

[52] Dublin, National Library of Ireland, MS 8014/I; Ford, 'Scottish protestant clergy', 128.

[53]Adair, 'True narrative', 81; Ford, 'Scottish protestant clergy', 129–30.

was through this ministry that Sir John, his mother and his wife had their own conversion experiences. So too did Humphrey Norton, another former lieutenant under Chichester, who upon 'the gospel made a clear and cleanly conquest'.[54]

While many scholars still emphasise the tensions between English puritans and Scottish presbyterians, under the strains of plantation life more held these individuals together than divided them. The links between some, moreover, may have predated events in Ulster. Hubbard was seemingly present at conventicles in Edinburgh in 1620—the year before he and his congregation settled in Ulster.[55] At least some of the Edinburgh meetings were held in the house of the notable nonconformist John Mein, brother-in-law of Blair's first wife.[56] In 1623 Blair married Beatrix Hamilton (of Bardowie and sister-in-law of Mein) and then Katherine Montgomery, Ards's daughter, in 1635.[57] Claneboye extended his patronage to his nephew, James Hamilton (Ballywalter), and to Robert Cunningham (Holywood), who were both active in the Antrim meetings.[58] Cunningham and Robert Hamilton, minister of Killileagh, also married daughters of Ards.[59] The Ards branch of the Montgomery family maintained close connections with the Eglinton Montgomeries in Ayrshire.

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[54] *PHI*, p. xxx; John Livingstone, *A Historical Relation of the Life of Mr John Livingstone, Minister of the Gospel* (Edinburgh, 1848), 27.

[55] David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. Thomas Thomson, 8 vols (Edinburgh 1842–9), vii. 434, 449.

[56] Robinson, 'Not otherwise worthy', 36.

[57] *Life of Mr Robert Blair*, 117, 134. Blair identified her father as the laird of Busbie (see D. G. Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638* (Oxford, 2000), 148), and as the same man who became Viscount Ards after establishing his estates in Ireland through the 'purchase of the lands of Ballishary' (*ibid*., 136).

[58] Reid, *History*, i. 95–6, 99.

[59] *Life of Mr Robert Blair*, 136.

Josias Welsh, minister of Templepatrick, informed Anne Countess of Eglinton in the 1620s of the success of his revivalist ministry.[60] The countess also supported the revivals in Scotland between 1625 and 1630, to which the preaching of Blair and John Livingstone contributed. Welsh found initial employment in Ulster not in a Scottish household but rather as chaplain to the Welsh settler Humphrey Norton. John Ridge, minister at Antrim, had, moreover, been settled there by Sir Arthur Chichester and then subsequently came under the patronage of the Clotworthys. Henry Calvert (or Colwart), who originally arrived in Ulster with George Hubbard, may have had a Chichester link and initially served as an assistant to the Scot Edward Brice at Broadisland, under the patronage of Lady Duntreath and her husband, William Edmonstone. Brice had been expelled from Drymen in Stirlingshire after falling foul of the bishops in 1613, after which Duntreath organised his move to Broadisland.[61] Because of Brice's age and infirmity, Lady Duntreath arranged for Calvert to serve as his assistant. After James Glendinning departed to visit the seven churches of Asia (see Rev. 2–3), Calvert was presented to Muckamore in 1630 by Roger Langford, John Clotworthy's brother-in-law and a convert of the revival.[62] Langford, Norton and Hugh Clotworthy (John's father) had all been supported in their settlement in Ulster on the back of faithful military service under Chichester.[63]

[60] *HMC*, x. apps 1, 46.

[61] Archibald Edmonstone, *Genealogical Account of the Family of Edmonstone and Duntreath* (Edinburgh, 1875), 9. Brice studied in Edinburgh under Charles Ferme, himself a student of Robert Rollock. Ferme vigorously opposed bishops who 'he accused of … violating the covenant'. See W. L. Alexander, 'Life of Ferme', in Charles Ferme, *A Logical Analysis of the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh, 1850), p. xvi; Reid, *History* i. 93–4; Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 93–4.

[62] Reid, *History*, i. 110–11; Adair, 'True narrative', 83; Andrew Stewart, 'A short account of the Church of Christ ...', in *PHI*, 367.

[63] Jonathan Bardon, *The Plantation of Ulster: War and conflict in Ireland* (Dublin, 2011), p. xxx.

While perhaps not identical in their views, these former military men formed a significant ministerial support network.[64]

Some of the connections highlighted above cannot be fully unpicked. There is, however, evidence that they extended beyond east Ulster. Several plantation-era Scots ministers, including James Glendinning, Josias Welsh and Andrew Stewart, were St Andrews graduates.[65] So too was their patron: Viscount Claneboye studied under Andrew Melville before becoming a fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, under its rigorously reformed provost, Walter Travers. While in that role, Claneboye tutored the future primate, James Ussher—as he had done previously at Dublin grammar school—in reformed theology.[66] It was from within this theological milieu that Ussher penned the thoroughly Calvinist articles of the church of Ireland in 1615. That Ussher and Claneboye were friendly and likeminded in their theologies may explain their tolerance and support of one another during periods of political and religious turmoil such as the Black Oath controversy. The theology that informed them, however, constituted a convergence of British reformed thought at the end of the sixteenth century, influenced particularly by the theologies of Thomas Cartwright, William Travers and Andrew Melville.[67] These leading reformers were together in Geneva in the early 1570s and greatly influenced each another. Melville later arranged for Travers and Cartwright to join him in St Andrews, although the offers were declined.[68] Cartwright served as chaplain to Adam Loftus, archbishop of Armagh, between 1565 and 1567 and Loftus nominated Cartwright as his successor.

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[64] Sir Arthur Chichester is known to have held 'innate puritan sympathies'. John McCavitt, *Sir Arthur Chichester, Lord Deputy of Ireland, 1605–1616* (Belfast, 1998), 6.

[65] Pearson, 'Alumni of St Andrews', 8.

[66] Ford, *James Ussher*, 37, 41.

[67] *Ibid*., 58.

[68] Thomas Fuller, *The Church History of Britain*, ed. James Nichols, 3 vols (London, 1842), iii. 125–6.

Meanwhile Travers's Trinity College Dublin acquired a unique manuscript of Melville's poetic reflection on Daniel 9.[69] The influence of these men on the their protégés created a network deeply implicated in Ulster politics which partly explains the concerted efforts of men like Chichester, Ards and Claneboye to support staunchly reformed ministers in east Ulster. Moreover, the personal relationships that these men forged through successive military and plantation endeavours with the Clotworthys, Norton and Langford may also explain the latter men's conversion experiences and patronage of the ministerial circle associated with the revivals. While Ford argued that support for these ministers may not have equated to a shared theology, the often close connections between the men challenges this interpretation. Blair, Cunningham and James Hamilton did, after all, marry daughters of Ards.

These networks were not limited to Dublin and Scotland. Sir John Clotworthy, for example, became a prominent member of the English parliament and functioned in many ways as the network's spokesman. As early as 1632–3 he invested in the Saybrooke plantation in Connecticut—an undertaking led by the influential English puritans William Fiennes (Lord Saye and Sele), Robert Greville (Lord Brooke) and John Pym and designed to expand colonial settlement beyond Massachusetts Bay.[70] Clotworthy maintained social and political links to all three, to Pym by marriage. Clotworthy seconded Pym's motion in parliament to investigate Irish grievances in November 1641. He helped to prepare the legal case against Wentworth and testified against the lord deputy.[71] In 1634 Clotworthy hosted John Winthrop jr., son of the colonial governor of

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[69] A. F. Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism, 1535–1603* (London, 1925), 20–3; Dublin, University of Dublin, Trinity College [TCD], MS 416, fos 2r–4v.

[70] J. T. Peacey, 'Seasonable treatises: A godly project of the 1630s', *English Hist. Rev.* 113 (1998) 667–79.

[71] I. J. Gentles, *The English Revolution and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms, 1638–1652* (London and New York, 2007), 46.

Massachussetts Bay, during a recruitment drive for the colony. Clotworthy held a meeting 'where diverse godly persons were appointed to meet … to conferre about a voyage to N[ew] E[ngland]'.[72] In the following years he corresponded with the Winthrops about colonial trade and the recruitment of new settlers. The importance of this connection came to the fore in 1636. As Wentworth's repression increased and several Scots were deposed from their ministries, Clotworthy provided financial assistance to Robert Blair, John Livingstone, Robert Hamilton, John Maclelland and members of their congregations—including Blair's wife, Katherine, the daughter of Viscount Ards—enabling them to emigrate to the Sayebrook colony. They commissioned the construction of the vessel *Eagle's Wing* (see Deut. 32:11) though stormy weather meant it never reached North America. Upon their return, the Scots interpreted the disastrous undertaking as a providential message that warned against abandoning the Church of Scotland.

Blair, Livingstone, Hamilton and Maclelland had by this point been deposed by the church of Ireland. Returning to Scotland, Blair filled the second charge in Ayr under William Adair, before transferring to St Andrews in 1639. Hamilton, Livingston and Maclelland also returned and sat in the general assembly of 1638 that abolished episcopacy. The Englishman Hubbard also left Ireland in 1636 and by 1641 had been inducted as minister in Paisley at the presentation of James Hamilton, second earl of Abercorn.[73] Importantly, all had returned to Scotland before the signing of the National Covenant.

As we have seen, the signing of the National Covenant significantly changed the situation for Scots in Ireland. This was not because the Covenant had any weight in Ireland but rather because it

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[72] R. S. Dunn, James Savage and Laetitia Yeandle (eds), *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), 159–160; F. J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America's forgotten founding father* (Oxford, 2003), 11–12, 256–8; Robinson, 'Not otherwise worthy', 70.

[73] Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae: The succession of ministers in the church of Scotland from the reformation*, 7 vols (Edinburgh, 1915–28) iii. 163.

altered the relationship between Scots who subscribed it and those who did not. In asserting that the Scottish nation was a people in covenant with God—autonomous even of the Stuart crown if it should attempt to usurp the headship of Christ—the Covenant could not be applied practically outside Scotland. While Wentworth feared what it might mean for Ireland—particularly if Scotland should take up arms against Charles I—committed Calvinists such as Claneboye would have recognised that it had no standing in Ireland. Yet, as Clotworthy and his puritan correspondents noted, Scotland's Covenant provided a model for attaining their wider ambitions of large-scale reformation and the forging of a people. Within months of the National Covenant's appearance, Clotworthy, then in London, wrote to correspondents in Scotland of the excitement among puritan-minded men in England who stopped all 'designs foreign' in the 'hope to find an America in Scotland'.[74] Clotworthy observed that several wealthy English puritans felt that the liberty they sought in the new world had been wrought north of the border by the Covenant.[75] Clotworthy asked for six copies of both *A short relation of the state of the kirk of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1638)—printed for distribution in England—and the National Covenant. *A short relation* was addressed to 'our Brethren in the Kirk of England' and explained the Covenant as a renewal of the Negative Confession (1581) and a 'good meane for obtaining the Lords wonted favour, having many examples

[74] *Memorials and Letters Relating to the History of Britain in the Reign of Charles the First* (Glasgow, 1788), 80; Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Wodrow Folio LXVI, fos 109–10. Although anonymous, the author was identified as Clotworthy. See Peter Donald, *An Uncounselled King: Charles I and the Scottish troubles, 1637–41* (Cambridge, 1990), 194.

[75] Donald, *Uncounselled King*, 194 argued that the English friends whom Clotworthy described in his letter were the puritan colonial proprietors Lord Saye and Sele, Lord Brooke and Robert Rich, second earl of Warwick, who all intended to travel to Providence Island in 1638. In the wake of events that year they did not go.

in holy Scripture that the people of GOD have happily renewed their Covenant with God'.[76] Clotworthy's old Ulster acquaintance, John Livingstone, was also in London delivering copies of both documents.[77]

Clotworthy and his English sympathisers saw in the Scottish Covenant a model not simply for resisting oppressive royal policies, but for forging corporate identity. As this article has shown, a close-knit but amorphous community developed among like-minded protestants in Antrim but it lacked a coherent identity. In early 1641 these protestants were simply Scots and English planters who despised episcopacy. The rising that began in the autumn of that year occasioned much destruction and trauma in this community. Although large numbers of Scots returned to Scotland, a sizeable rump of the community that had petitioned the English parliament earlier in the year remained. In 1642 a Scottish army arrived in Ulster to supress the catholic rising. By June it had established the first presbytery in Ireland, at Carrickfergus. It comprised army chaplains—some of whom had previously ministered in Ireland—and soldiers as lay elders. The presbytery sought support from Ards and Claneboye who responded positively. Several congregations then requested admittance to the newly-formed presbytery. Instructions for constituting elders were sent to Ballymena, Antrim, Cairncastle, Templepatrick, Carrickfergus, Larne and Belfast in Co. Antrim and Ballywalter, Portaferry, Newtonards, Donaghadee, Killileagh, Comber, Holywood and Bangor in Co. Down.[78] It should come as no surprise that many of these congregations had been ministered to by men in the network described above.

Two months later petitions were submitted to the general assembly from 'the most part of the Scottish Nation in the North of Ireland, in their own names, and in the name of the rest of the

[76] *A short relation of the state of the kirk of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1638), B4r.

[77] Livingstone, *Historical Relation*, 100–1.

[78] Adair, 'True narrative', 131.

Protestants there'.[79] The petitioners did not present themselves as a part of the Church of Scotland but implored the assembly to 'pity poore Macedonians crying to you that ye would come over and help us' by allowing ministers who had flown to Scotland during Wentworth's persecution to return to Ulster.[80] In claiming 'a common Covenant' with the Church of Scotland, the petition seemed to mix the experiences of Scottish soldiers and chaplains and those of the planters.[81] The distinction, however, was made clear in a petition from Ballywalter which heralded the 'peaceable and pure Government of his Church in that covenanted and blessed land' of Scotland.[82]

The assembly replied by instructing Blair, Hamilton, Maclelland and Livingston, alongside Robert Baillie and Robert Ramsay, 'to visit, comfort, instruct, and encourage the scattered flocks of Christ'.[83] The proposed tours of four months proved impractical and short visits were not what the petitioners had envisaged. They wrote again in 1643 stating that the return of the exiled ministers would be 'but a restoring of what *we* lost and *you* have found'. The letter was delivered by Sir Robert Adair of Kinhilt along with a request from Derry for a minister and a letter from Ards that supported these requests whilst also noting his own need for a minister in Newtownards and a chaplain for his regiment.[84] The assembly ordered a rotation of eight ministers to visit Ulster the following year. The production of the Solemn League and Covenant in August 1643, however—and particularly Clotworthy's calculated intervention to secure Ireland's inclusion—fundamentally altered the proposed tour. Instead, the English parliament instructed that the Scots ensure the Solemn League

[79] *True copy of the whole printed Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (n.p., 1682) [*AGA*], 148.

[80] *Ibid*, 149; reference to Acts 16.

[81] *AGA*, 149.

[82] quoted in Armstrong, 'Ireland's puritan revolution?', 1,058.

[83] Reid, *History*, i. 361–3.

[84] *Ibid*., 378–81.

'may be taken by all the Officers, Soldiers, and Protestants of their [Scottish] Nation in *Ireland*: As likewise, this House will take care, that the *English* Protestants, Commanders, and Officers in *Ireland*, shall take the Covenant also'.[85] As Armstrong noted, 'It was a monumental decision. It not only extended to Protestant Ireland the personal opportunity and obligation of Covenant participation, but did so by sifting the national mix and implicitly conceding to the kingdom of Scotland an obligation for its nationals in Ireland'.[86] Since Ireland had been included after the Scots had agreed the terms of the Solemn League, rendering authority over Scots in Ireland to the Scottish government was a pragmatic necessity.

All this meant that multiple interpretations of the Solemn League and Covenant were presented to Ulster. Andrew Robinson argued that Clotworthy's ambition was to cast the Solemn League as an 'English' document that would render the loyalty of Irish protestants to the Long Parliament and its increasingly clear puritan vision.[87] This was problematic for British settlers in Ireland who recognised the royalist Irish government in Dublin and complicated further by the Cessation agreed between Ormond and the Irish confederates in September 1643. Meanwhile, the English and Scottish parliaments sought to ensure that the English and Scots in Ireland were aligned to the parliamentarian and covenanter parties of their respective nations. Yet the view from London or Edinburgh did not chime with experiences in Ireland, particularly since the acquisition of subscriptions and the preaching or lecturing that accompanied the Solemn League were undertaken by Clotworthy's servant, Owen O'Connolly, and Scottish ministers with links to Ulster. That these two vectors of interpretation would remain hermetically sealed within the 'English' and 'Scottish' spheres that the English parliament imagined was never likely. However, what did transpire was a contest between a vision of the 'League' which Vane and others in England fostered for the

[85] *CJ*, iii. 277.

[86] Armstrong, *Protestant War*, 97.

[87] Robinson, 'Not otherwise worthy', 219.

advancement of the protestant religion and resistance to royal authority–something sure short of what Clotworthy desired, and the Scottish 'covenant' vision of an all encompassing submission to King Jesus and the forging of unbreakable commitments between subscribers. The Scots ministers sent to Ulster in search of subscriptions to the Solemn League espoused an interpretation of covenant that extended beyond religious and political reform, and which resonated deeply with the experience of many Ulster protestants.

The Solemn League and Covenant first arrived into Ulster in the hands of Owen O'Connolly in early December 1643. Four months later Scottish ministers, including James Hamilton (formerly of Ballywalter), Hugh Henderson, John Weir and William Adair, arrived to propogate subscription in Ulster.[88] Subscription, administered by chaplains, began with Scottish regiments. Those without a chaplain received it from the general assembly's delegates. In this process, subscribing reflected the model of congregational subscription of the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant in Scotland. After the regiments subscribed, many civilians renounced the Black Oath and then took the covenant. In Carrickfergus '400 who had renounced the black oath publiquely, and taken the Covenant, and 1400 of the Army and Town and places about, besides women, who had not taken the same … now entered into the covenant'.[89] Similar success was reported in Belfast, Comber, Newtownards, Bangor, Broadisland and Island Magee 'not only where Souldiers were quartered, but where they were not quartered'.[90] Before the Solemn League and Covenant could be taken ministers explained the text through 'Scripture and Solid consequences'.[91] The account provided by Patrick Adair, William Adair's nephew, was adamant 'that very few were found to resist the call of God, the

[88] Reid, *History*, i. 420–2.

[89] Adair, 'True narrative', 144.

[90] *Ibid*.

[91] *Ibid*, 145.

Solemnity and Spirituality of carrying on this work, was *like the cloud filling the Temple, there being a new tabernacle in erecting in the land*.'[92]

Adair's account helpfully explains how ministers presented the Solemn League and Covenant, for he recorded the texts they preached. At Ballymena William Adair and John Weir expounded on Ezra 8:20, a description of the return from Babylonian captivity and of the descendants of the Gibeonites who were set apart from the rest of the Canaanites by Joshua to hew wood and bear water in service of the temple and the Levite priests, and Psalm 102:13, which is a prayer of the faithful in Babylon looking forward to the restoration of Zion.[93] The narrative of the Gibeonites was important to plantation history in explaining the relationship between protestants, like the Israelites, providentially entitled to settle the land and a compliant native population.[94] This is a direct reference to Joshua 9:23, where Joshua cursed the Gibeonites—a people in Canaan during the conquest – for their attempt to 'beguile' the Israelites for which he declared 'there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood, and drawers of water for the house of God'. Notes in the Geneva-Tomson-Junius bible explain this as a commitment to 'the uses of the Tabernacle and of the temple when it shall be built'. This provided a meaningful interpretation of the subordination of the native Irish, but also a malleable hermeneutic for determining blame and obligation appealed to by

[92] *Ibid*. (my italics).

[93] Killen has the text as Ezr. 8:23 (see *PHI*, 146) but the references to the descendants of the Gideonites of Ezr. 8:20 have greater contextual significance.

[94] In 1598 the chief justice of Munster wrote to William Cecil: 'It will never be better so long as the Irish have any trust or authority committed to them. It were more fit they were (as the Gibeonites among the Hebrews) hewers of wood and drawers of water; only, let them, retain, the liberty of a subject, and live private[ly], not trusted with any authority'. See *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, 1598–1599*, ed. E. G. Atkinson (London, 1895), 396.

both catholic and protestant authors.[95] In Ulster this biblical model shaped the self-narrative of the planters. By the late-seventeenth century the historian of the Montgomeries recorded that in the early years of plantation Hugh Montgomery, Viscount Ards, through 'his piety made some good store of provisions in those fair seasons, towards roofing and fitting the chancel of that church, for the worship of God', using the labour of 'Irish Gibeonites and Garrons … to hew and draw timber for the sanctuary'.[96] The context into which Adair and Weir employed these biblical passages in the wake of the 1641 rising is important. They, like the church of Ireland minister Daniel Harcourt in Down and Connor, claimed that while the root of rising was Irish duplicity, protestant planters had been irresponsible in their ill-fated accommodation of the other prioritising political over pious motives. According to Harcourt, 'how dearly the Israelites paid for their cruel mercy in not exterpating the idolatrous Canaanites those that policy left, for hewers of wood, and drawers of water, hew the flesh, and draw the bloud of their masters'.[97] In employing Ezra 8:20 Adair and Weir created a narrative of protestants in Ulster, like Israel in Canaan, and the curses associated with not clearing the land of previous inhabitants and the toleration of idolatry. But now, through God's willingness to covenant with the people, they could expect God's restoration of a Zion in Ireland.

[95] For the pamphlet debate on the obligation of the state to protect Irish catholics at the Restoration, see [P. Walsh], *A Letter desiring a just and mercifull regard of the Roman Catholicks of Ireland* (1660), 2; Roger Boyle, earl of Orrery, *The answer of a person of quality to a scandalous letter lately printed and subscribed by P. W. intituled, A letter desiring a just and merciful regard of the Roman Catholicks of Ireland* (1662), 55.

[96] *The Montgomery Manuscripts*, ed. George Hill (Belfast, 1868), 61.

[97] Daniel Harcourt, *The Clergies Lamentation: Deploring the sad condition of the kingdome of Ireland* (London, 1644), B2r.

At Coleraine, in front of a 'congregation … very great from Town and Country', they again identified the culpability of those who tolerated catholicism and its influence on the church of Ireland:

> they expounded more fully the Covenant and among other things told the People their miseries had come from these sorts of people who were theire sworn [enemies] … against though espec{ially} from the Papists. Yet the righteous [ ]/hand/ of God had afflicted them for their going so near the papists in their former worship and Government in the church: that whereas the episcopall party endeavoured peaceableness with the Papists a symb[]zing with them in much of their Superstition. The Sovereign holy God had turned their policy to the contrary effect for their conformity with idoloters going on in a course which had a tendency at least that way.[98]

After the sermons 'the whole people of the country present did solemnly acknowledge the [Black] Oath and by lifting up hand's to God entered into the Solemn League and Covenant with which was mixed prayers, and singing of Psalms'.[99] As in Scotland, the subscribing of the Solemn League and Covenant was principally understood at a local act. This was replicated at Billy and Dunluce. At Derry Scots ministers faced opposition before preaching in St Columb's cathedral and delivered sermons in the marketplace 'on the Subject of taking god's people into covenant'. After the sermon they explained the Solemn League and Covenant 'Declairing the Divine authority of it'.[100] In doing so they directly equated the Solemn League and Covenant with the covenants entered into by Judah in 2 Chronicles 15:15, Jeremiah 50:5 and Nehemiah 9. While the text of what was said does

[98] Adair, 'True narrative', 146.

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] *Ibid*., 150.

not survive, the themes on which they focused can be deduced from both the scriptures referenced and the interpretive framework provided in the marginal notes of the Geneva-Tomson-Junius bible. For Adair the preaching paralleled

> the cases then in hand both as to the Persons entering into the Covenant and case of the time requiring reformation and preservation of Religion which was engaged unto in the covenant and explaining the covenant as it rendered all secure, that which was proper to them as well as to God that which was his due.[101]

In 2 Chronicles 15 after Judah had 'made a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers' (v.12), 'all of Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn unto the Lord with their heart, and sought him with a whole desire, and he was found of them. And the Lord gave them rest round about' (v.15). The link between the swearing of the covenant between Judah and God under King Asa, like the Solemn League and Covenant, included the eradication of idolatry, or idolators.[102] This was a prominent theme in Scottish covenanting.[103] The Geneva-Tomson-Junius bible, probably used by the Scots ministers, included the marginal note on verse 15: 'So long as they served him aright, so long did he preserve and prosper them.' Therefore, the continued safety and prosperity of those who subscribed the covenant depended on successfully upholding covenanted obligations. The ministers

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[101] *Ibid*.

[102] 2 Chr. 15:13: 'And whosoever will not seek the Lord God of Israel, shall be slain, whether he were small or great, man or woman', in the Geneva-Tomson-Junius bible (1599). The marginal note glosses the text: 'These were the words of their covenant, which commanded all idolaters to be put to death, according to the Law of God, Deut. 13:5, 9, 15.'

[103] *The Autobiography and Diary of Mr James Melvill*, ed. Robert Pitcairn, Wodrow Soc. (Edinburgh, 1842), 490–1; Calderwood, *History,* vi. 107.

referenced Jeremiah 50:5, 'They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, *saying*, Come, and let us cleave to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten'. Obedience would result in the restoration of Israel and Babylon being crushed. Finally, Nehemiah 9 reminded the people of Israel of both the promises God had made to them, and the sins of the people and their fathers. It reaffirms God's covenant with Abraham 'to give unto his seed the land of the Canaanites' and other tribes of the Promised land (v.8), that God hears 'the afflictions of our fathers in Egypt, and heard their cry by the red Sea' (v. 9). All these scriptural references would have resounded with the planters of Ulster, as will be explored shortly, but the most important section of Nehemiah 9 for the preaching in Derry is verse 10: 'therefore thou madest thee a Name, as appeareth this day'. In signing the Solemn League, Adair remarked that the people of Derry entered into 'happy condition of A Sanctified and true union', meaning not just with God but with one another.[104]

The importance of being given a 'name' should not be abruptly passed over, particularly because this was not an unusual reference when preaching for subscription of the Solemn League. In Belfast ministers preached on Isaiah 56:5–7. Here, the prophet exhorts those who 'take hold of my covenant' (v. 4): 'Even unto them will I give in mine House and within my walls, a place, and a name better than of the sons and of the daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be put out'. The implication is that the Solemn League and Covenant was presented as the means by which God would establish a distinct people with a name, within the church of God and under divine protection. According to the Geneva gloss, 'They shall be called after my people, and be of the same religion: yea, under Christ the dignity of the faithful shall be greater than the Jews were at that time'.

This might seem like meaningless rhetoric within the tumultuous context of mid-seventeenth-century Ulster. However, in the Scottish reformed tradition, developed from the 1560s, it had great resonance. The Scots Confession emphasised the connection between a people being called, their establishing a godly worship, and subsequent territorial blessing:

[104] Adair, 'True narrative', 151.

> It is our strong belief that God preserved, instructed, expanded, honoured, adorned, and summoned his Church from death to life in all eras from Adam up to the advent of Christ Jesus in the flesh. For he called Abraham out of the land of his fathers, gave him instruction and multiplied his descendants, wonderfully taking care of them and even more wonderfully liberating them from tyrannical subjection to Pharaoh. It was to them he gave his commandments, structures and ceremonial rites. He settled them in the country of Canaan.[105]

Thus, Scripture offered a typological model that might be claimed by other 'chosen' people and used to make territorial assertions. As the only model of how God relates to a society, the Old Testament account of the general election of Israel dominated the formation of protestant, but particularly reformed, visions of community and nationhood.[106] In Hungary, for instance, it was important to meld 'the history of biblical Israel and of the Hungarians, especially highlighting how Israel's exodus from Egypt to their promised, holy land [w]as mirrored by the Hungarians' migration from Asia to their holy land in the Danubian basin'.[107] In presenting the Solemn League and Covenant, Adair and Weir packaged the Scottish model of covenanting specifically for Ulster protestants, a covenanted people with a name in their own right.

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[105] Ian Hazlett, 'A new version of the Scots confession, 1560', *Theology in Scotland* 17 (2010) 41–66, at 44.

[106] For a survey of relevant scholarship, see D. M. Appelbaum, 'Biblical nationalism and the sixteenth-century states', *National Identities* 15 (2013) 317–32.

[107] Graeme Murdock, 'Magyar Judah: constructing a new Canaan in eastern Europe', *Studies in Church History* 36 (2000) 263–74, at 264.

Within months of the signing of the Solemn League, the Church of Scotland received another petition. Already the tenor of the message and the description of the petitioners' community had changed:

> [we are] confidently expecting from the Lord our nearer conjunction with you than before, an accomplishment of what is agreed into the Covenant ... [and are] ... the more encouraged to beleeve that God shall raise up the Tabernacle of David that is fallen, and repair the breaches thereof: For since we are Covenanted with God, and united our selves together, our dying Spirits have revived and we sing like these who have come forth from their Graves, for God hath had mercy on Jacob.[108]

The Solemn League and Covenant had become for some Ulster protestants what the National Covenant had been for Scotland, or even what God's covenant with Abraham had meant for Israel: perpetual, linked to a people and place, and promising blessings upon obedience. It made them a people well and truly in covenant with God. It gave them a name and marked the reestablishment of the Tabernacle of David—which represented the restoration of the true spiritual Israel (Amos 9:11 and Acts 15:16). This affirmed an elected people and, by direct correlation, made Ulster their Canaan, deliverable by divine sanction. The petitioners identified the crucial opportunity 'that may erect Christ's throne of discipline, and may help to bring in others, and then shall we sing, that the people who were left to the sword, have found grace in the wilderness'.[109]. In this newly covenanted

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[108] Armstrong, 'Ireland's puritan revolution?', 1,061; *AGA*, 215. The final reference is to Isa. 14:1, 'For the Lord will have compassion of Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and cause them to rest in their own land: and the stranger shall join himself unto them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob'.

[109] *AGA*, 159–62. Paraphrase of Jer. 31:2

status, they asserted confidence that their enemies 'who if they once shall see us possessed of our own Inheritance, those Canaanites dare not offer to thrust us out'.[110] Here the connection between a covenanted people, a promised land and the previous inhabitants of the land whom God deemed to be displace is explicitly referenced. For Adair, 'The covenant was taken in all places with great affection ... in the hopes of laying a foundation for the work of God in the land'.[111] Despite the continued hardships to be faced, the authors emphasised their gratitude that even if they were to 'peerish in our misery, wee may die a Covenanted People'.[112] The Solemn League and Covenant, as framed by Adair and Weir, had profound significance for its subscribers in Ulster because it provided the means by which disillusioned and reformed-minded planters became a people in their own right with claim to divine promises.

The Solemn League and Covenant greatly influenced the communities that subscribed it and it became a hallmark of their identity. It was reported from Belfast in 1644 that only those who had subscribed the Solemn League were eligible for election as burgesses.[113] Elsewhere British regiments in Ulster recruited 'without examining of what Cuntry or nation or *religion* they are soe [long] as they take the Covenant'.[114] While the Solemn League did not instil a uniform approach to the tumultuous Ulster politics of the 1640s and 1650s any more than it did in Britain, the covenanted communities of Ulster demonstrated remarkable resistance to the advances of Cromwellian Independent and baptist ministers. Their autonomy from Scotland was evident in the Act of Bangor

[110] *Ibid*., 160–1. This refers to Jos. 11:23 and the partition of Canaan among the Israelites by Joshua after Moses's death.

[111] Adair, 'True narrative', 145.

[112] *AGA*, 215.

[113] TCD, 1641 Depositions, MS 838, fo. 7v.

[114] *Ibid*., fo. 9v.

(1654) which distanced them from the bitter Protester-Resolutioner divisions.[115] Moreover, when on the eve of the Restoration Ulster presbyterians wrote to the leading Scottish covenanter, Robert Douglas, hoping to continue pursuit of the covenant's aims, they did so as equal covenanted partners.[116] Admittedly, relations between the Church of Scotland and Ulster presbyterians in the following decades appeared at times less than equal, partly because of Ulster's on-going dependence on Scotland's universities for trained ministers.[117] Yet from the outset the Church of Scotland recognised the presbyterians of Ulster as a vineyard beyond 'their own bounds', even if it had sprouted from a Scottish cutting.[118] For Ulster presbyterians the Solemn League, despite its implications for the three kingdoms, principally represented the foundation of their own authority. Hence Ulster presbyterians denounced 'from our watch-towre' both the English parliamentarians as sectaries for executing the Charles I, and Viscount Ards for siding with the Irish confederates. The Laggan army, which widely subscribed the Solemn League and Covenant, abandoned Ards 'with one text of scripture … "To your tents, O Israel"', while the presbytery denounced him for leading 'this

[115] Robert Armstrong, 'Viscount Ards and the presbytery: politics and religion among the Scots of Ulster in the 1640s', in Kelly and Young (eds), *Scotland and the Ulster Plantations*, 18–40; Crawford Gribben, *God's Irishmen: Theological debates in Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford, 2007), 99–127.

[116] Glasgow University Library, MS Gen 210, fos 40–2, 47–8, 98–9.

[117] Ulster presbyterians were dependent on ministerial provision from Scotland. Of the 188 ministers who served their congregations between 1642 and 1690, 162 were Scottish-born or trained. See Vann, 'Presbyterian social ties', 245–6.

[118] *AGA*, 190.

Land to make defection'.[119] Here the people had become Israel, and the land united to the covenant cause. Gillespie observed that 'From within Ulster ... the covenant was more important as a marker of identity than as an expression of action…. The Solemn League and Covenant provided a rallying point for [the] community. To fail to take the covenant was to betray one's community'; but this was because Ulster presbyterians understood the Solmn League and Covenant as the authority upon which their community existed.[120] This was probably not stated more explicitly by Patrick Adair and Andrew Stewart because the Solemn League had become a proscribed document by the time they wrote their histories and in the political uncertainties around the rights of dissenting protestants it seemed an undesirable flag to fly.

The Solemn League and Covenant left three distinctive marks on Ulster presbyterian identity. First, it located covenant subscribers in a land over which they could claim dominion and for which they had responsibility for curbing sin. Hence the overwhelming push for maintaining presbyterianism as the most effective government for upholding the strict obligations on a covenant people, much as Scottish presbyterians had argued. The deep belief in a covenanted people provided the basis for enforcing attendance and moral behaviour not just of church members, but also of their tenants and wider society (including Gaelic Irish), just as New England puritans and Scots presbyterians did.[121] The covenant's importance in this respect may explain the on-going significance of baptism as described by Joseph Boyse in the 1690s—'the Sacred Rite, whereby that Covenant is first publickly Enter'd into'—and the claim of a contemporary in 1680s Ulster that 'the

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[119] *A Declaration by the Presbytery at Bangor, the seventh of July, 1649* ([Edinburgh, 1649); Hill (ed.), *Montgomery Manuscripts*, 189; *Declaration by the Presbytery at Bangor, in Ireland, July 7. 1649* (London, 1649), A4r.

[120] Gillespie, 'Scotland and Ulster', 95, 97.

[121] W. T. Latimer, 'The old session book of Templepatrick', *Journal of the Royal Soc. of Antiquaries of Ireland* 31 (1901) 259–72, at 271.

people will not omit christening with their own minister supposing the children to be christened into the solemn league and covenant'.[122] The need for enforcing discipline created a 'strong local base for Presbyterian revolution'.[123]

Second, when Ulster presbyterians lost their ability to maintain discipline and operate freely under the weight of the penal laws the narrative of a people in search of their promised Canaan resurfaced with widespread preaching that freedom was be found elsewhere. Out of frustration, and with a degree of eschatological hope, James McGregor of Aghadowey led his congregations to New England in 1718 'to avoid oppression and cruel bondage, to shun persecution and designed ruin, to withdraw from the communion of idolators and to have an opportunity of worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience and the rules of His inspired Word'.[124] In 1729 the church of Ireland minister Ezekial Stewart noted presbyterians 'Bellow from their pulpits God had appoynted a Country for them to Dwell in' where they could escape 'the Bondage of Egipt and goe to ye land of Cannan'.[125] By this point they were speaking of the American colonies. However, transposing Canaan from Ulster to New England should not eclipse the expectation that God would provide a land for a covenanted people.

Third and finally, the Solemn League laid the foundation for the close association between the protestant cause and Ulster during the home rule crisis of the nineteenth century. Expressed as a commitment to 'God and Ulster', the anti-catholicism of the Solemn League found a pan-protestant

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[122] Cited in R. Gillespie, *Devoted People: Belief and religion in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997), 21.

[123] Raymond Gillespie, 'The presbyterian revolution in Ulster', *Studies in Church History* 25 (1989), 159–70, at 164.

[124] K. A. Miller, 'The New England and federalist origins of "Scotch-Irish" ethnicity', in Kelly and Young (eds), *Scotland and the Ulster Plantations*, 105–18, at 105.

[125] Belfast, Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, E.2019/1/3/141.

expression (without the denunciation of episcopacy) in the Ulster Covenant (1912). This is because the Solemn League was not merely a link in the narrative of presbyterian or protestant Ulster: its subscription represented the moment—in their eyes and in their understanding of the Divine will—that the protestants of Ireland had brokered their claims to divinely granted dominion.

The Solemn League and Covenant was to Ulster what the National Covenant was to Scotland. It did not represent a form of Scottish imperialism; it did not make Ulster a satellite of Scotland and its kirk. Rather, as Armstrong argued, it was an intellectual legacy transmitted to Ulster. The Solemn League enabled an 'imagined community' of committed puritan and presbyterian planters in the 1630s to become in 1643 a people with a name.[126] Recognising the original significance of the covenant for presbyterian subscribers in the longer history of plantation Ulster is, therefore, essential for understanding the history of the north of Ireland. The Solemn League provided the grounds for the nascent community of disillusioned and puritan-minded planters of Ulster to become a covenanted people in their own right and to lay claim to the promises of their own Canaan.

[126] B. A. Vann, *In Search of Ulster-Scots Land: The birth and geotheological imagings of a transatlantic people, 1603–1703* (Columbia, SC, 2008), 69–77.